

# Proper Use and Disposal of Needles and Syringes

## Be Smart. Be Careful. Be Aware. Be Safe.

If you're one of the many people in Massachusetts who use syringes to manage your health care at home, here's what you need to know about the safe use and disposal of needles, syringes and lancets (sharps).

### Be Smart. Use a Sharps Container.

A sharps container is a single-use container that is filled with used medical needles and then disposed of safely. These can be purchased at medical supply stores or even ordered through the mail.

**DO NOT** put sharps containers in with recyclables.

**DO NOT** dispose of sharps in garbage if your community has another disposal option (see disposal site list at the end of this fact sheet).<sup>\*</sup> If your community does not currently have a disposal site, place them in a rigid, puncture resistant plastic container with a secure cap before placing in the garbage.

**DO** visit a medical supply store to purchase sharps containers.

**DO** call the AIDS Action Committee Pharmacy Access Hotline to find out more about personal sharps containers. 1-800-988-5209

**DO** check out these sharps mail back services. All provide a variety of container sizes and prepaid mailing cartons:

- Medasend 1-800-200-3581
- Stericycle 1-800-355-8773

### Be Careful.

Protect yourself, your community, your environment, and family and friends.

The proper disposal of needles and syringes is important!

**DO** put used syringes in sharps container immediately.

**DO** keep needles away from children and pets.

**DO** bring a sharps container when traveling.

**DO NOT** throw sharps in the garbage if your community has another disposal option (see disposal site list).

**DO NOT** flush sharps down the toilet or drop into storm drains.

**DO NOT** clip, bend or recap needles.

### Be Aware.

Needles, syringes and sharps containers may not be thrown in recycling bins. Do not dispose of sharps in garbage if your community has another disposal option (see disposal site list). If you must, place them in a rigid plastic container with a secure cap. These items must be disposed of at a drop off site or through a medical mail back service.

<sup>\*</sup>Effective July 1, 2009, medical waste regulations will not allow the disposal of sharps in household garbage.

### Be Safe.

Reduce your risk of blood-borne diseases like hepatitis and HIV/AIDS.

**DO** use a new needle every time you inject.

**DO** clean the injection site with soapy water, alcohol swabs or rubbing alcohol.

**DO** find out your HIV/viral hepatitis status. Get tested. If you are not infected you can stay that way. If you are, find out how to take care of yourself and avoid passing HIV/viral hepatitis to others.

**DO** clean your sharps with bleach IF you must reuse them.

**DO NOT** inject in the same spot over and over again.

**DO NOT** share needles, syringes, cookers, cotton or water.

### Be Informed.

Resources are just a phone call away. All calls are confidential.

#### • AIDS Action Committee Hotline

1-800-235-2331

Referrals to confidential and anonymous HIV counseling and testing

#### • AIDS Action Committee Pharmacy Access Hotline

1-800-988-5209

#### • Diabetes Services in Massachusetts

617-624-5486

#### • Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection

617-292-5500

#### • Massachusetts Department of Public Health

617-624-6000 [www.mass.gov/dph](http://www.mass.gov/dph)

#### • Massachusetts Hepatitis C Program

1-888-443-HEPC (4372)

[www.mass.gov/dph/cdc/masshepc/](http://www.mass.gov/dph/cdc/masshepc/)

#### • Massachusetts Substance Abuse Education Information and Helpline

1-800-327-5050 TTY 617-536-5872

[www.helpline-online.com](http://www.helpline-online.com)

Information and confidential referrals to treatment and self-help groups

#### • Needle Exchange Programs (NEPs)

You can exchange used syringes for new, sterile ones, be referred to medical help, drug treatment, testing for HIV and dispose of used syringes at any of these sites:

##### Boston

1-617-771-2138

1-800-383-2437

##### Cambridge

1-617-661-3040

1-617-680-1063

##### Northampton

1-413-586-0310

1-800-696-7752

##### Provincetown

1-508-487-8311

1-866-668-6448

Needle Exchange is free to the public.

Information on sharps drop-off sites is also available at: [www.mass.gov/dph](http://www.mass.gov/dph)

Sale and Possession of Hypodermic Syringes and Needles in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts (M.G.L. chapter 94C, sections 27, 27A and 32L)

- Individuals 18 years and older may legally purchase syringes and needles from a pharmacy without a prescription.
- Disposal of syringes must be done safely and responsibly.

State Sanitary Code:

(M.G.L. chapter 111, section 127A)

Improper disposal of infectious or physically dangerous medical or biological waste may result in penalties of up to \$25,000 or two years in a corrections facility.

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